

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-03 L-01 H-02 INR-05 PM-01

PRS-01 SP-02 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 OMB-01

SAB-01 SAM-01 USIE-00 ACDA-10 INRE-00 SSO-00 NEAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8003

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 5417

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y F O R T E X T A N D D I S T R I B U T I O N .

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, EG, US

SUBJECT: THE INTERIM AGREEMENT: AGAIN THE DECISIVE STAGE

1. SUMMARY. FIVE MONTHS AFTER SUSPENSION OF
NEGOTIATIONS, SECRETARY'S RETURN TO MIDDLE EAST THIS
WEEK IS SEEN HERE AS FINAL ACT IN ATTAINMENT OF
INTERIM AGREEMENT. IT SEEMS LOCAL CONSENSUS THAT, ALTHOUGH
GAP ON IMPORTANT ISSUES STILL REMAINS, GOI THIS
TIME AROUND WILL FIND ITS WAY TO POSITIVE CONCLUSION.
GOI LEADERSHIP HAS LAUNCHED CAMPAIGN TO EXPLAIN
BENEFITS OF PROPOSED AGREEMENT, BUT ISRAELI PUBLIC
REACTION IS GENERALLY UNENTHUSIASTIC. ISRAELIS
RECOGNIZE IMPORTANCE OF US ROLE, HIGHLIGHTED BY LAST
WEEK'S WASHINGTON CONSULTATIONS ON ECONOMIC AID, COMPENSATION FOR
ABU RODEIS AND FINANCING OF NEW SINAI DEFENSE LINE.
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ISRAELI PUBLIC HAS COME TO REGARD US FULFILLMENT OF THEIR
EXPECTATIONS AS PART OF COMPENSATION FOR AGREEMENT TO EXCHANGE
TANGIBLE TERRITORIAL STRATEGIC CONCESSIONS IN
RETURN FOR INTANGIBLE EGYPTIAN POLITICAL COM-

MITMENTS. HERUT AND LIBERAL PARTIES (LIKUD) HAVE CALLED FOR GOI'S RESIGNATION TO BE FOLLOWED BY PLEBISCITE OR ELECTION, BUT IN OUR VIEW GOVERNMENT IS IN NO DANGER OF FALLING. ISRAELIS FROM ALL POLITICAL CAMPS HOWEVER ARE ASKING THEMSELVES WHETHER PROPOSED AGREEMENT CONSTITUTES STEP TOWARD PEACE OR SIMPLY A WITHDRAWAL UNDER PRESSURE. DOUBTS PERSIST AS TO ARAB INTENTIONS, THRUST OF US MIDDLE EAST POLICY, AND IMPLICATIONS OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS FOR NEXT STAGES. IN LOOKING AHEAD TO UNCERTAIN FUTURE, MODERATES ARE CONCERNED THAT GOI WILL BE UNABLE TO UTILIZE TIME GAINED TO DEVELOP ITS OWN POLITICAL INITIATIVES, WHILE HARDLINERS BELIEVE STAGE HAS BEEN SET FOR NEW US/ARAB PRESSURES LEADING TO ADDITIONAL WITHDRAWALS DETRIMENTAL TO ISRAELI SECURITY. ATMOSPHERE IN ISRAEL ON EVE OF SECRETARY'S RETURN IS FAR FROM JUBILANT. END SUMMARY.

2. ISRAELIS REGARD SECRETARY'S RETURN TO MIDDLE EAST THIS WEEK AS FINAL STAGE IN NEGOTIATIONS FOR INTERIM EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI AGREEMENT. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT, IN CONTRAST TO MARCH, HIS ARRIVAL THIS TIME WILL LEAD TO A POSITIVE CONCLUSION ALTHOUGH ON IMPORTANT ISSUES DIFFERENCES STILL REMAIN UNRESOLVED. OBSERVERS REGARD IT AS UNLIKELY THAT EITHER SECRETARY WOULD PLAN OR GOI AGREE TO SHUTTLE IF AGREEMENT NOT PROBABLE, AND INTERPRET INTENSE PACE OF ISRAELI/US CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON THIS PAST WEEK AS EFFORT BY ISRAELIS TO RESOLVE AS MANY ISSUES AS POSSIBLE BEFORE SHUTTLE GETS UNDERWAY.

3. AS CONCLUSION OF NEGOTIATIONS DRAWS NEAR, DOMESTIC DEBATE HAS BECOME MORE INTENSE. WEEKEND PRESS COMMENTARIES HAVE BEEN MOSTLY CRITICAL, CHALLENGING PREMISE THAT AGREEMENT CONSTITUTES STEP TOWARD PEACE, CRITICIZING GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND QUESTIONING IMPLICATIONS OF SPECIFIC COMPONENTS SUCH AS TIME FACTOR AND US PRESENCE. FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON, IN WEEKEND TV INTERVIEW, VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED WORK OF CONFIDENTIAL

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NEGOTIATING TEAM, ASSERTING THAT IN LAST FIVE MONTHS ISRAEL HAS ACHIEVED BETTER TERMS, BOTH FROM EGYPT AS REGARDS DURATION OF AGREEMENT AND FROM UNITED STATES AS REGARDS ECONOMIC/MILITARY AID (INCLUDING COMPENSATION FOR ABU RODEIS AND FINANCING OF NEW DEFENSE LINE) AND US PRESENCE IN PASSES, WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING ITS SECURITY INTERESTS. DEFENSE MINISTER PERES HAS STRESSED IN RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT AGREEMENT WILL CONSTITUTE MAJOR TEST OF EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS, AND HAS CHARACTERIZED IT AS HESITANT BUT SERIOUS ATTEMPT BY BOTH PARTIES TO SEEK POLITICAL RATHER THAN MILITARY RESOLUTION OF THEIR DIFFERENCES.

4. GOVERNMENT'S CONDUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS HAS COME UNDER CRITICAL SCRUTINY, WITH A RECENT PORI POLL, PUBLISHED IN HAARETZ AUGUST 18, SHOWING 47.6PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED TO BE DISSATISFIED. SOME COMMENTATORS HAVE CHARGED THAT, BY FAILING TO FORMULATE ITS OWN PEACE PROGRAM, GOI HAS CONDUCTED NEGOTIATIONS DEFENSIVELY, IN THE PROCESS CREATING NEEDLESS AND HARMFUL TENSIONS IN US/ISRAELI RELATIONS, AND ALLOWING DANGEROUS PRECEDENT TO BE ESTABLISHED WHICH WILL AFFECT FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS. ONE FORMER GENERAL, NOW A UNIVERSITY LECTURER AND MEMBER OF LEFT-WING YAAD, HAS WRITTEN FOR INSTANCE THAT GOI CARELESSLY HAS GIVEN UP PRINCIPLE OF DEMILITARIZATION OF SINAI, ACCEDING TO CONCEPT OF NARROW BUFFER ZONE IN LIEU OF BROAD DEMILITARIZED ZONE WHICH WOULD GIVE IDF STRATEGIC DEPTH FOR CONDUCTING SWIFT WAR OF MOVEMENT.

5. DEBATE OVER RABIN'S PHILOSOPHY OF 'GAINING TIME' ALSO HAS OCCUPIED POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS. SOME DOUBT THAT SADAT WILL HONOR COMMITMENT TO REFRAIN FROM USE OF FORCE FOR DURATION OF AGREEMENT IF HOSTILITIES

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 5417

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ENSUE ON SYRIAN AND/OR JORDANIAN FRONTS. OTHERS ARE ASKING WHETHER GOI HAS COHERENT POLITICAL PROGRAM FOR UTILIZATION OF TIME WHICH IT HAS GAINED. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER EBAN HAS WARNED AGAINST ILLUSION THAT AGREEMENT WILL PROVIDE ISRAEL WITH RESPITE FROM

NEGOTIATING PRECESS, AND HAS URGED GOI TO PREPARE ITSELF FOR NEXT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS. FOR MORE AND MORE ISRAELIS, "GAINING TIME" NOW SEEMS DUBIOUS AND POINTLESS PROPOSITION, AS REFLECTED IN BITTER JOKE MAKING ROUNDS HERE ACCORDING TO WHICH RABIN, UPON LEARNING OF RECENT 11-MINUTE FORD-DINITZ MEETING, ALLEGEDLY SAID, "WELL, AT LEAST WE HAVE GAINED ANOTHER 11 MINUTES".

6. ISSUE OF US AID HAS COME TO BE EQUATED WITH SACRIFICES ISRAEL IS BEING REQUIRED TO MAKE IN INTERIM SETTLEMENT. THERE IS RATHER WIDESPREAD PUBLIC EXPECTATION IN ISRAEL--TO SOME EXTENT FED BY COMMENTS FROM US LEGISLATORS
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(MOST RECENTLY SENATOR EAGLETON DURING CURRENT VISIT TO ISRAEL PUBLICLY TOLD ISRAELI AUDIENCES THIS)--THAT IN RETURN FOR AGREEMENT ISRAEL CAN COUNT ON GETTING SOMETHING CLOSE TO \$3 BILLION FROM US (ORIGINAL AID REQUEST OF \$2.5 BILLION PLUS COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF ABU RODIES, RELOCATION OF GROUND DEFENCE LINES, INCREASES DUE TO INFLATION).

7. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION ON PROS AND CONS OF AMERICAN CIVILIAN PRESENCE IN PASSES. PERES PUBLICLY HAS EMPHASIZED POTENTIAL BENEFITS, SEEING IT AS STABILIZING COMPONENT IN SEVERAL WAYS: AS GUARANTOR OF US INVOLVEMENT, AS DETERRENT AGAINST EGYPTIAN VIOLATIONS OF BUFFER ZONE, AND AS OUTSIDE PRESENCE LESS VULNERABLE TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL PRESSURE THAN UNEF FORCES. ISRAELIS FROM WIDE SPECTRUM OF POLITICAL PERSUASIONS HAVE CHALLENGED THESE ASSUMPTIONS, NOTING THAT AMERICAN PRESENCE--EVEN IN CIVILIAN FORM--WOULD MARK DEPARTURE FROM CARDINAL ISRAELI PRECEPT THAT IT HAS NEVER ASKED FOR MANPOWER ASSISTANCE FROM OUTSIDE. THERE IS ALSO CONCERN THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT COULD WEAKEN CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT BY RAISING SPECTRE OF GRADUAL AND INCREASING AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN AREA ON MODEL OF OUR VIET NAM EXPERIENCE. IN THIS CONNECTION, SOME COMMENTATORS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED PERES' SUGGESTION, ON TV PROGRAM TWO WEEKS AGO, THAT COMPARABLE US PRESENCE ON GOLAN MIGHT BE CONSIDERED AS COMPONENT OF INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA.

8. AT THIS STAGE DOMESTIC POLITICAL LINEUP REMAINS UNCHANGED, WITH MEMBERS OF COALITION UNENTHUSIASTICALLY IN FAVOR (MINUS PART OF RAFI FACTION OF LABOR PARTY LED BY EX DEFMIN MOSHE DAYAN AND YOUTH FACTION OF NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY), AND OPPOSITION LIKUD IN UNITED OPPOSITIONSPWVAQCJLTQOIRTN (#) IS BROAD CONSENSUS AMONG OBSERVERS HERE THAT AGREEMENT WILL PASS IN KNESSET.

9. ISRAELIS ARE ALREADY ASKING THEMSELVES, "WHAT

NEXT?" BEYOND INTERIM AGREEMENT LIES AN UNCERTAIN
FUTURE. INDEED, TODAY'S ANXIETIES AND DOUBTS GO BEYOND
DEBATE OVER SPECIFICS OF INTERIM AGREEMENT TO DEEPENING
PUBLIC CONCERN THAT GOI, WITHOUT FULLY REALIZING IT,
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MAY BE INVOLVED IN PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS WHOSE TIMING
AND OUTCOME IT CANNOT CONTROL. FROM ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE,
BASIC QUESTION REMAINS WHETHER THIS IS STEP TOWARD
PEACE OR WITHDRAWAL UNDER PRESSURE WHICH ONLY WILL
WEAKEN ISRAEL MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY, AND

ENCOURAGE ARAB APPETITES FOR FURTHER ISRAELI
CONCESSIONS. AS OF TODAY, WE BELIEVE MOST ISRAELIS
WOULD ADHERE TO LATTER OF THESE DEFINITIONS.
MOREOVER, THEY ARE DISCOMFITED THAT
GOI--ALTHOUGH IT CANNOT SAY SO IN SO MANY WORDS--
APPEARS NOW TO HAVE AGREED TO GIVE UP THE PASSES AND
OILFIELDS AS THE EGYPTIANS HAVE DEMANDED ALL ALONG
AND AS THE US FIVE MONTHS AGO HAD URGED TI TO DO.
ISRAELIS RECOGNIZE THE COSTS OF THE EARLIER DECISION
HAVE BEEN HIGH IN TERMS OF US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP AND
BROAD US AND WORLD SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI POSITIONS.
TOON

NOTE BY OC/T: (#) PARA NR 8-AS RECEIVED-CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL VISITS, PEACE TALKS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TELAV05417
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750286-0915
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750898/baaaaexu.tel
Line Count: 247
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 JUL 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <10 NOV 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971006
Subject: n/a
TAGS: PFOR, EG, IS, XF, PFOR, (KISSINGER, HENRY A)
To: STATE INFO AMMAN
BEIRUT
CAIRO
DAMASCUS
JERUSALEM
USUN N Y

Type: TE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006